

ILLINOIS STATE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN

May/June 2008 • Volume 90 Number 3

The Big Question: Why are honey bees disappearing, and what can be done to save them?

Reprint from The Independent

London, England

By Michael McCarthy

Environment Editor

Wednesday, 23 April 2008

Why are we asking this now?

Because yesterday Britain's beekeepers, an eminently peaceful and undemonstrative group of people, felt steamed up enough about the issue to mount a lobby of Parliament, bending the ears of peers and MPs.

What are they lobbying for?

They want the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to carry out an urgent research programme into the diseases that seem increasingly to be threatening honey bees in Britain and in other parts of the world. The beekeepers have costed the programme at £8m over five years. The Food and Farming Minister, Lord Rooker, accepts that bees are facing serious threats. In fact, he himself has warned that honey bees could be wiped out in Britain. But he says that Defra simply doesn't have the cash to fund the research.

What are these threats?

Bee colonies have always been vulnerable to disease because they are densely packed environments through which infections can spread rapidly; a bacterial infection known as foulbrood has been known for more than a century. But in recent years the threats have grown. One of the biggest has been the varroa mite, a tiny insect that feeds off the bodily liquids of bees in the hive, especially in their larval stages. The mite, which carries a damaging virus and can wipe out whole bee colonies, was first detected in the US in 1987 and in Britain in 1992; now it has spread to much of the world. It can be contained with chemicals, but increasingly, the mites are developing resistance to the chemicals used against them.

Other damaging hive invaders from other parts of the globe, which have not yet been seen in Britain but may well be on the way here, driven by climate change, include the small hive beetle, the parasitic brood mite, and the Asian hornet. But the biggest fear of all concerns Colony Collapse Disorder.

What is Colony Collapse Disorder?

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is a recently-observed but little-understood phenomenon in which worker bees from a colony or hive abruptly disappear, and the colony dies. It may be due to stress, or viruses, or a combination of both, or other causes. It began to be noticed in the US in the autumn of 2006 and the spring of 2007, and was thought to be devastating bee colonies in more than 20 states, but enormous uncertainty still surrounds the condition, as hives and colonies can collapse for other reasons, especially during the winter. CCD is thought to have been detected in several countries of continental Europe, but not yet in Britain. Beekeepers are on tenterhooks.

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So does this mean that Britain's bee colonies are safe for the moment?

Not according to the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA), which represents those people in straw hats, veils and gloves. In January the BBKA warned that the threats were so great that if urgent action was not taken, honey bees would disappear completely from Britain by 2018, causing "calamitous" economic and environmental problems. Hence yesterday's lobbying of parliament.

But surely all bees do is make honey?

Far from it. They certainly do make honey, but more importantly, they are an essential agent of pollination for a vast range of plants, many of which are important human foodstuffs. Without the presence of bees, much of agriculture would be impossible, and this is a sobering thought right now, as feeding the world is suddenly becoming more difficult because of rising demand and the transfer of much crop production into biofuels, especially in the US.

Most of the pollination for more than 90 commercial crops grown throughout the United States is provided by *Apis mellifera*, the honey bee, and the value from the pollination to agricultural output in the country is estimated at \$14.6bn (£8bn) annually. In Britain alone, pollination by bees of a suite of just 10 crops, ranging from apples and pears to oilseed rape, was calculated to be worth £165m per annum in 2007.

The BBKA points out that this is £800m-plus over five years – and the research programme they are calling for over the same period would cost a mere one hundredth of that. Yet the Government pleads poverty.

Is the Government doing nothing to safeguard the future of honeybees?

On the contrary. Two weeks ago Lord Rooker, the minister who turned down the BBKA's research programme just before Christmas, outlined a long-term strategy to protect the health of honey bees in England and Wales. Launching a consultation paper, he said: "Honey bees are facing serious threats from a growing number of pests and diseases, and it is vital that we do all we can to respond effectively to these threats, and to sustain honey bees and beekeeping for today and for future generations."

A series of "new or enhanced priority activities" related to disease control or good bee husbandry is proposed, which includes more training for keepers to identify diseases and a campaign to persuade beekeepers to sign up to a national database. One proposal in particular, for volunteer beekeepers to be enlisted in future emergencies to help the national team of bee inspectors track and eradicate new viruses, attracted attention: one commentator called it "a Dad's Army for bees."

Did this not satisfy the beekeepers?

They welcomed it, certainly, but they insist that the research they want is essential. At their lobby of Parliament yesterday, Tim Lovett, the BBKA President, said: "We will keep our bees only if the Government will help us to keep them healthy. Does the Government want the nation to go without honey on their toast, not have home-grown strawberries to go with cream, and even put their own crusade for the public to eat five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables at risk? Food production is now an important issue and bees are central to it."

He added: "We note that the US government immediately invested \$80m into research on Colony Collapse Disorder, which has devastated their bee colonies, affecting pollination of the apple orchards, the almond and orange crops. CCD has not yet crossed the Channel from Europe, but we are urging the Government that it needs to be prepared should this happen. The Government spends just £200,000 out of a budget of £1.5 million for bee health on research. Immediate action needs to be taken to avoid this economic and ecological disaster in the making." β

So...How was your honey crop last year?

The Agricultural Statistics Board has released its honey report for 2007. Here is how Illinois fared.

Yield per colony in Illinois was down 4.5% from an average of 66 in 2006 to 63 pounds per colony in 2007. Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa all reported similar decreases while Missouri and Kentucky reported slight increases in yield.

The average price of honey (based on expanded sales) in Illinois increased to \$2.40 from \$2.17 per pound in 2006. Illinois is considerably above the national average that slipped from \$1.04 to a \$1.03 per pound in the same period.

According to the USDA report the total value of honey produced in Illinois in 2007 was \$1,361,000. Nationally the US produced \$153,233,000 worth of honey.

Nationwide the number of managed colonies of bees producing honey has decreased from nearly 3.5 million 20 years ago to less than 2.5 million reported in 2007.

The USDA report surveys only honey production and those colonies involved. Colonies used in and the value of colonies used for pollination are not included.β

**Don't Miss
Peoria 2007!
June 14
The ISBA
Spring Meeting**

ISBA SPRING MEETING

June 14, 2008

The ISBA Spring Meeting will be held on **June 14, 2008 at Wildlife Prairie State Park** in Peoria, IL. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. with registration and refreshments from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Registration will be \$5/person.

The Heart of Illinois Beekeepers, along with other Central Division Associations, are planning a fun and informational day. Our featured speaker will be Nancy Ostiguy from Penn State who has worked with Dr. Diana Cox-Foster researching the relationship between Varroa mites and endemic viruses in honeybee colonies as well as other honeybee health issues. Stu Jacobson (from U of I, Springfield) will be speaking on "How to get the best disease/mite resistant queens possible". Other planned speakers include Steve Chard, Illinois Chief Apiary Inspector, and Greg Fisher of Wild Blossom Meadery in Chicago who will bring samples of his work.

Important: A **"Walk in the Park" Buffet** will be available for members for \$11.95 which includes tax and tip. This delicious buffet will have BBQ ribs, fried chicken, baked beans, baked potatoes, potato salad, cole slaw, condiments, assorted rolls, cookies, brownies, coffee and iced tea. **It is important that you RSVP to Janet Hart** (harthoney@msn.com or (309) 446-3004) by **June 1st** to assure your place at the buffet. There is a snack shop located above our meeting room or you can also plan on brown bagging and spending some time enjoying the park; lunch break will be limited and you will not have time to go 'out' for lunch.

Directions to Wildlife Prairie State Park (3826 N. Taylor Road, Hanna City, IL 61536):

Take I-74 to Exit 82 (Kickapoo-Edwards Exit, approximately 6 miles west of Peoria). Turn south (left if coming from Peoria) onto Kickapoo-Edwards Rd. This will turn into Taylor Rd. at the IL Rte. 8 stop sign. Continue straight through stop sign to top of hill, entrance will be on the left (3.2 miles from the Interstate). Tell them at the gate that you are attending the ISBA meeting and they will direct you from there.

(www.wildlifeprairiestatepark.org)

Dr. Ostiguy to Speak to ISBA

Nancy Ostiguy is an environmental toxicologist (M.P.H., UC Berkeley; Ph.D. Cornell) interested sustainable and organic agriculture with a focus on honeybees. Her work on honey bees includes non-pesticidal approaches to control pests of the honey bee, interactions between the varroa mite, an obligate parasite of the honey bee, and endemic honey bee viruses, epidemiology of honey bee viruses, abiotic influences on honey bee survival, and factors related to honey bee nutrition and other stressors. For five years (2002-2006), she was on the National Organic Standards Board. Currently she works with Pennsylvania Certified Organic on organic agriculture issues. β



Are there Pesticides in Your Honey?

Editor's comment: This letter was received by ISBA looking for help in a research project at Penn State. The professor involved with this project—Dr. Ostiguy— is the keynote speaker at the ISBA Spring Meeting.

I am a student at Penn State working with Dr. Ostiguy on a research project testing honey from all over the country for pesticides. If you or any other beekeepers would be willing to help us, we are looking to collect honey the bees store to eat over winter and new honey (not nectar). We will be comparing them to see if pesticide levels are higher in honey that bees eat over the winter.

If anyone would be willing to help us, we need between 1/8 - 1/4 of a cup of honey you harvested from your colonies last fall and the same amount of honey from an overwintered hive/colony. It does not matter if this honey is from a hive where the colony has died. In fact, if you have a dead out, a sample from this colony could be very interesting.

If you send us honey samples we would, of course, keep any information about you completely confidential. Also, we will send you the results of our research. You will find out if any pesticides are in your honey, along with which ones and how much, if any are present. (It is possible that we will receive more samples than we have the funds to analyze. If this happens we will randomly select the honey samples. For any honey that is not chosen, we will let you know and ask if you mind if we can hold onto the samples in case we find additional funding and are able to analyze more honey. For any honey that is chosen we will send you the results.)

Please send the honey in a leak-proof plastic container to:

Reagan Furbish
501 ASI
Department of Entomology
Penn State
University Park PA 16802

β

A Letter from the President

Dear Fellow Beekeepers and ISBA Members,

I hope you all have been enjoying the warm Spring as much as I have! I have truly missed spending time with my Honey Bees and now have been getting my “fix”. I lost about 50% of my colonies from this past Winter, so have ordered packages, reviewed my IPM strategies and am ready to press-on!

You saw my note about our deepened relationship with the Illinois Department of Public Health, in our last newsletter. Although the recent tightening on farmer’s markets has been very frustrating, our renewed relationship now allows for direct communication. Recently, ISBA Central Region Director, Nathan Sasse spoke alongside Elizabeth Watkins, IDPH Food Processing and Program Coordinator. This session was designed to update the IDPH on Honey Processing techniques and the frustrations facing Illinois Beekeepers. Nathan’s message was very well received by the group and no doubt his and the ISBA’s frustrations were heard!

ISBA 2009 Dues Increased to \$10

Over the past 2 years the ISBA Board of Directors has debated raising our annual association dues. As you can imagine, in today’s economy, we are being hit very hard by a number of directions. Since our last dues increase (a number of years ago now), postage has increased significantly, our annual meeting costs have increased, attendance at the Illinois State Fair has decreased (our #1 fund raising activity) and travel of speakers has jumped significantly, etc.

The ISBA Board is confident that this increase from \$6 is a nominal increase given the value the ISBA is providing its membership. Please ensure that your local, affiliate associations have their 2008 dues into Rita Taylor right away (at the current \$6/member). The new membership dues of \$10 goes into effect 11/1/08 as the 2009 dues begin to renew.

IDA Only has 3 active Apiary Inspectors

As most of you know, spring of 2007 saw a significant challenge getting our contracted Apiary inspectors approved for the season. This year has seen similar issues with the Governor’s office. We need your help! Please consider writing a letter to the Governor’s office encouraging an immediate approval of our Apiary Inspector contracts. Many of you have seen a sample letter provided on our Yahoo Group. If you would like a sample, please contact me directly. If you are not a member of our ISBA Yahoo Group and would like to become one, please see www.isba.us for more info. Please write the Governor at the address below:

Governor Blagojevich
Statehouse Room 207
Springfield, IL 62706

CCD and Winter Kill Info to Steve Chard

Steve Chard, our Chief State Apiary Inspector, sends monthly reports to the Illinois Department of Agriculture on the health of our colonies. With the issues surrounding our contracted Apiary Inspectors, Steve is asking for our assistance. Please e-mail Steve how many colonies you lost this past winter and if you think you have experienced CCD.

Finally, please review all of your local association contact information located on www.isba.us. If you have any changed contact information, please notify Ken Haller so that we may update this information.

Ken Haller
President, Illinois State Beekeepers Association
vikinghoneyfarm@comcast.net

ISBA Members Strike Gold in ABF California Competition

At the 2008 American Beekeeping Federation’s American Honey Show held in January in Sacramento, California, Illinois beekeepers earned five first place ribbons.

Class A—Water White Honey
Charles Lorence, Aurora, IL

Class G— Dark Honey
Charles Lorence, Aurora, IL

Class I—Round Comb Sections
Gene Killian, Paris, IL

Class J—Cut Comb Honey
Gene Killian, Paris, IL

Class L—Creamed Honey
Karen Lorence, Aurora, IL

Jim and Karen Belli of Wadsworth acquired a total of five second and third place ribbons.

An excellent Illinois showing!β

It is Happening in Illinois

June 14

ISBA Spring Meeting in Peoria hosted by the central region.

June 21-22

ISBA hosts a booth at the Illinois Product Expo on the Fairgrounds in Springfield to showcase Illinois honey. ISBA VP Bill Buckley (630 654 1867), who is heading up the booth, is looking for assistance. Pitch in and help.

August 7-17

Illinois State Fair in Springfield. This is an important PR and moneymaking event for ISBA. Volunteers are needed to man the booth as well as to setup and take down the display. Contact Rita Taylor to volunteer—217 626 1319.

November 1

ISBA fall meeting hosted by the Illinois Department of Agriculture on the Fairgrounds in Springfield. Dr. James Tew, well-known author, academic and beekeeper, will be the keynote speaker.β

APIARY INSPECTION SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

Steve Chard, Illinois Department of Agriculture

Spring has finally sprung! This is typically an exciting time of the year for beekeepers where everything basically starts fresh.

In my last article, I asked for help in recruiting individuals to possibly serve as new Department Apiary Inspectors. I have received a good response and wish to thank all of you who responded or encouraged perspective apiary inspectors to contact me. We are currently awaiting approval to go forward with the process to fill the positions.

If you have accessed our Bees and Apiaries Program webpage over the past month or so, you probably noticed 2006 or 2007 information on the site regarding Apiary Inspectors, when it should present 2008 information (2008 information was actually on the webpage in January 08). Well, believe it or not, a hacker from Italy (as in country) accessed the Department's website a couple of months ago and did some damage. Consequently, much of the information on our website is outdated. The Department and Central Management Services are currently working to straighten things out.

Due to the current Apiary Inspector vacancies, only Rita Taylor, Dan Wright and Mike Gerard are currently performing apiary inspections. If you reside out of their district and need an inspection done, please contact me at 217/782-6297; otherwise, please contact Rita, Dan or Mike directly. I need to coordinate the inspections to get the maximum benefit from just 3 Apiary Inspectors actively working. We'll do our best to cover as many areas as possible, particularly if a moving permit is needed

or a disease or pest problem crops up. We'll hope to have a full team of inspectors soon and appreciate your patience and cooperation during this time.

Our inspections this year have revealed some positives and negatives. We have seen some winterkill and a few small cases of varroa mites and nosema. We have also witnessed some very strong colonies. Some areas are reporting winterkill loses of around 50%. We currently don't have sufficient information to draw any major conclusions across the state at this stage.

All of us are attempting to obtain as much information on Colony Collapse Disorder as possible. I've been searching for national information on how prevalent it was in late 2007/early 2008, but that information seems to be elusive at the time I'm writing this article. ISBA President Ken Haller has asked many of you to report any CCD-like symptoms to me as we continue to monitor for the presence of this disorder. If you believe your colonies may have CCD, please contact me at 217/782-6297 or a Department Apiary Inspector so arrangements can be made for an inspection. We have conducted a couple of inspections this year where beekeepers felt there apiaries may have been affected by CCD. In those cases, there were other typical problems that caused the loss. We will provide CCD updates as they become available and will continue to closely monitor for the disorder. Updates are also provided on ISBA's website.β



Langstroth—King of the Bees

A new book

KING OF THE BEES tells the story of Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth, a 19th century minister and beekeeper, known today as "The Father of American Beekeeping." Lorenzo suffers from a terrifying undiagnosed ailment he calls "head troubles." Graduated from Yale College, he becomes an ordained minister, then leaves the pulpit due to illness. He marries Anne Tucker, a strong, loving woman who becomes the pivotal force in his life.

To help take his mind off his ailment, Lorenzo takes up beekeeping. Believing that God has chosen him to save bees from destruction, he discovers the principle of "bee space," the secret of the hive that has eluded beekeepers since Aristotle. Lorenzo utilizes the principle of "bee space" in every inside dimension of a radical new hive of his own design--the top-opening, movable-frame beehive. He obtains a patent for his hive, yet, due to the Civil War and to his gentle, altruistic nature, fails to protect his patent.

Lorenzo imports the Italian honeybee, a more prolific honey producer than the American black bee, making honey production profitable for the first time. Finally, he writes and publishes "Langstroth on the Hive and the Honey Bee," securing his place in history as "The Father of American Beekeeping."

Written in screenplay format, **KING OF THE BEES** is a dramatic, historical-fiction account of Lorenzo and Anne Langstroth's inspirational real-life struggle to overcome Lorenzo's terrifying illness, discover the secret of the hive, and create a radical new hive that allows honey to be harvested without killing bees.

More information at <http://www.trafford.com/07-0487.β>



ISBA Executive Board 2006

Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association is open to all persons interested in bees and beekeeping. Beekeepers are urged to join through their local associations. Dues for 2006 are \$6 for the calendar year January 1 through December 31 only. Dues include a subscription to this newsletter, the ISBA Bulletin. Beekeeping journals are available at about 25% discount to members as listed below; rates are subject to change without prior notice. Make checks payable to: Illinois State Beekeepers Association and mail to: Rita Taylor, Secretary, 4274 Taylor Homestead Road, Pleasant Plains, IL 62677-4024

Please indicate new or renewal subscription when ordering journals.

Address Changes: Send old and new address six weeks prior to date of change when practical to the association secretary.

Reduced Journal Rates for 2006 (*members only*)

	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr
American Bee Journal	18.70	35.40	49.80
Bee Culture	21.00	38.00	N/A
The Speedy Bee	13.25	25.25	34.00

President

Ken Haller
627 S. Saylor Avenue
Elmhurst, IL 60126
630 359 3991
kenhaller@comcast.net

Vice President

William Buckley
6525 S. Western Avenue
Willowbrook, IL 60527
630 654 1867
dotbuckbee@att.net

Secretary

Rita Taylor
4274 Taylor Homestead Road
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677-4024
217 626 1319
rjandeta@warpnet.net

Treasurer

Udell Meyer
8844 Trio Lane
Edwardsville, IL 62025
618 633 2429

Directors

Northern Region

Erik Whalen-Pedersen
9810 N. Hunters Lane
Spring Grove, IL 60081
815 675 0426
NIBA@mchsi.com

Central Region

Nathan Sasse,
1020 2000th Avenue
Chestnut, IL 62518
217 737 8219
nasasse@ccaonline.com

Southern Region

Ray Chapman
R. R. 1 Box 215
Bunker Hill, IL 62014
618 585 4506
honey@bhil.com

ISBA Bulletin Editor

Larry Kregel
9409 Voss Road
Marengo, IL 60152
815 923 4449
lkregel@mc.net

The Illinois State Beekeepers Association Bulletin (USPS 258-600) is published bimonthly at 4274 Taylor Homestead Road, Pleasant Plains, IL 62677-4024. Membership is \$6.00 per year that includes a one-year subscription to the Bulletin

POSTMASTER: Send address Corrections to Illinois State Beekeepers Association 4274 Taylor Homestead Road, Pleasant Plains, IL 62677-4024.

ILLINOIS STATE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Rita Taylor, Secretary
4274 Taylor Homestead Road
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677-4024

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ISBA Spring Meeting June 14, 2008